

Get ready to ride - Starting the motorcycle season properly

For riders in cold weather regions, it's almost time to unpack your bike. If your motorcycle has spend a long winter's night out of service, the following are some points to consider when you begin to get it ready for the road. We must focus on some items that may require special attention after extended storage and on things that should get attention now. Your owner's manual will have a checklist for a standard service.

The T-CLOCK INSPECTION

The Motorcycle Safety Foundation created the T-CLOCK as a memory and organization ad for a pre ride safety check of a typical motorcycle. Each letter represents a particular inspection category, as follows:

- T – Tires & Wheels
- C – Controls
- L – Lights & Electrics
- O – Oil
- C – Chassis
- K – Kickstand

TIRES AND WHEELS

Tires: Pressure correct (cold), tread condition. No cuts, bulges, puncture of foreign objects.

Wheels: Spokes tight and intact; rims true; no free play when flexed; bearing seals intact; spin freely.

Brakes: Firm feel; sufficient pad depth. No leaks or kinks in hoses or cables.

CONTROLS

Levers: Pivot bolt and nut; action and position correct; pivots lubed.

Cables: Ends and shafts lubed; no fraying or kinks; no binding when handlebar turned; proper adjustment.

Hoses: Check for damage or leaks, proper routing.

Throttle: Snaps closed freely when released; no excess play.

LIGHTS

Brake and Taillight (s): All filaments work; both levers actuate brake light.

Headlight: All filaments work; properly aimed; no damage.

Lenses: Clean; no condensation; tight.

Reflectors: Clean; intact.

Battery: Fluid level; terminals clean and tight; held down securely; vent tube not kinked or misrouted.

Wiring: Check for pinching or fraying; properly routed; no corrosion.

OIL AND FLUIDS

Levels: Brake fluid, oil, final drive, transmission, coolant, fuel.

Leaks: Check all systems for leaks.

Condition: Check color of brake & coolant.

CHASSIS

Frame: Paint lifting or peeling may indicate cracking.

Steering head & swing arm bearing: Lift wheels off floor, grab lower fork legs and pull and push to feel for play; repeat at rear. Turn fork to feel for detents in bearings.

Suspension: Smooth movement; proper adjustment; no leaks.

Chain or belt: Tension; lube; look for wear.

Fasteners: Look for missing or loose fasteners, clips, pins.

KICKSTAND

Sidestand: Retracts firmly; no bending or damage; cut-out switch operates; spring intact.

Centerstand: Retracts firmly; no damage.

FITNESS. Brush up on your riding skills. Find a safe place to practice riding skills such as fast stops, figure eights, U-turns, etc., so you're ready for the season. You'll be glad you did.

HANDWASHING your Motorcycle is the only way to achieve a clean and undamaged motorcycle. Because some parts are not waterproof a steam cleaner should not be used.

PROTECTIVE Clothing and a Helmet are the only things that will help in event of a severe accident. Even in the first weeks of the riding season protective clothing will be necessary due to the temperatures still being extreme different during the day. Clothing that reflects will make you be seen better and prevent you in being involved in an accident.

FIRST exits should be taken slowly. Instead of a long trip the first tour should be short so that you can get used to your Motorcycle. Helpful are practical training methods on an unused parking area, so you get your feeling and your balance back.

ROAD DAMAGES are very often after winter months. Motorcycle riders should be aware of potholes and lane grooves because they are more dangerous to them than any other driver. Another area is holes that have just been repaired with tar. These zones are very slippery when roads are wet or during high temperatures

LEFT CURVES are underestimated dangerous maneuvers. Especially in left curves drivers forget due to the extreme angle of there body to the roadway, it is hard to hold a stable position. Heavy items are to be kept low in the luggage area. No more than 20lbs. should be carried along.